

THE PARK AREA AND ITS MISSION

DESCRIPTION OF PARK

Park Location

The Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area (BISO) lies 65 miles northwest of Knoxville, Tennessee in southeastern Kentucky and north central Tennessee. The watershed covers 1,382 square miles, of which the Big South Fork comprises 195 square miles. The upper reaches of the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River flow through the Cumberland Mountains while the lower river winds through tortuous canyons in the Cumberland Plateau.

The Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area is located in Scott, Fentress, and Pickett Counties, Tennessee (4th Congressional District); Morgan County, Tennessee (3rd Congressional District); and McCreary County, Kentucky (5th Congressional District).

Major access corridors include Interstate 75 and 40, and Highways 27, 127, 63, and 92.

Legislated Purpose and Significance of Park

The scenic, ecologic, and historic values of the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River create an area of unique beauty and outstanding outdoor recreational opportunities. As a natural free-flowing stream, the Big South Fork offers some of the best white water canoeing and river related recreation in the eastern United States. To protect these values, Congress directed the establishment of the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area.

The "National River" designation has no legislative origin however the term has been used by Congress to legislate an area into being when that area is centered around all, or a portion of, a free-flowing river. The designation is used to protect areas containing unique natural and/or cultural features. Designated river systems are to be maintained in their free-flowing state. Recreational use of these streams is allowed if compatible with resource protection.

The National Recreation Area (NRA) concept was established in 1962 by Executive Order 11017. The subsequent Federal Recreation Advisory Council's Circular No.1 (1,4) states that NRA will be more clearly responsive to outdoor recreation demand than other areas which are established primarily for preservation of natural and historical resources, multiple use, or water resource development. They will be established where "natural endowments" are above ordinary in quality and appeal, and will generally be established within a 250 mile driving distance of urban population centers.

The Big South Fork was established in March of 1974, by Public Law 93-251 (88 Stat. 12) "...for the purposes of:

1. ...conserving and interpreting an area containing unique cultural, historic, geologic, fish and wildlife, archaeologic, scenic, and recreational values
2. ...preserving as a natural free-flowing stream, the Big South Fork of the Cumberland River, major portions of its Clear Fork and New River stems, and portions of their various tributaries, for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations
3. ...the preservation of the natural integrity of the scenic gorges and valleys;
4. ...the development of the area's potential for healthful outdoor recreation.
5. ...for the benefit of the economy of the region'.

The establishment of the National Area reflects a decision that preservation, recreational enhancement, and economic development are appropriate goals for the area. Preservation, in this context, will ensure the continuation of the dynamic natural processes which have shaped the landscape.

The Big South Fork is one of the first attempts to combine the concept of a National River with that of a National Recreation Area, and to have economic development as a purpose. Because of this, it is a relatively unique area.

The National Area is significant as it offers extreme beauty, a free-flowing river, rugged wooded slopes, diverse cultural resources, and the possibility of a multiplicity of recreational pursuits to millions of residents of the southeastern United States. It is well within a one day drive of Chattanooga, Louisville, Knoxville, Atlanta, Asheville, Nashville, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Cleveland and a number of smaller population centers.

The area protects a diversity of rare, endangered, or threatened species.

It has been called one of the most significant archeological areas in the Southeast. There are an estimated 10,000 archeological sites within the boundary. Research has indicated use of the area back to the Paleo-Indian period --- 10,000 to 12,000 years.

Legislation establishing the Big South Fork caused the bringing together, in a unique blend, a multiplicity of recreational possibilities, significant cultural, and a variety of natural resources for the benefit of the people to this country. In so doing, Congress protected for future generations the diversity found here.

Official interest in the Big South Fork began as early as 1881 when the Army Corps of Engineers (COE) published a study on improving the river for navigation. Other studies which considered flood control and hydropower generation were published for Congress in 1933, 1935, 1946, and 1961.

The 1961 study recommended a high dam at Devil's Jump. This was in conflict with a Bureau of Outdoor Recreation recommendation that the area be studied as a unit of the National River System.

In 1963, when the COE resurfaced the 1961 proposal for a dam at Devils Jump, Congress directed two studies; one to update and review the 1961 dam proposal, and the second to assess alternative uses of the BIG SOUTH FORK. The accomplishment of these two studies resulted in recognition of the outstanding resource potential of the river and gorge and the lack of economic justification for flood control and power generation. Consequently, Congress created the Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area in 1974.

Water Resources Development, Title I, Section 108 of Public Law 93-251 established the BIG SOUTH FORK. The Law provides clear directives on how the area should be managed. The major directives are cited below.

- a. Provides direct guidance as to the purposes for which the area should be managed.
- b. Establishes the general boundaries of the BIG SOUTH FORK.
- c. Establishes that the Secretary of the Interior shall administer the area in accordance with the provisions of the Service Organic Act, the Act of August 25, 1916 (39 Stat. 535, 16 U.S. C. 1, 2-4) as amended and supplemented.
- d. Provides that the Secretary of the Interior may use any statutory authority available to the Department for the conservation and management of wildlife and natural resources as is deemed appropriate.
- e. Directs that the Secretary permit hunting, fishing and trapping in accordance with applicable Federal and State laws.
- f. Allows for the management of fish and wildlife resources after consultation with State agencies.
- g. Directs that the BIG SOUTH FORK "...be established and managed for the purposes of preserving and interpreting the scenic, biological, archaeological, and historical resources of the river gorge areas and developing the natural recreational potential of the area for the enjoyment of the public and for the benefit of the economy of the region."
- h. Established two categories for management of the area: The "gorge" area and the "adjacent", or plateau area.

2. Specific Legislative Restrictions:

Just as management direction was established by Public Law 93-251, various restrictions which bear on park management were established.

- a. Total acreage is restricted to no more than 125,000 acres.
- b. Within the boundaries of the Big South Fork NRRA, lands and waters or interests therein may be acquired by donation, purchase with donated or appropriated funds, or by exchange.
- c. Lands owned by the States of Kentucky and Tennessee or any political subdivision thereof may be acquired only by donation. This constraint does not apply to roads and rights-of-way for roads.
- d. An individual tract of land only partly within the boundary may be totally acquired to avoid severance costs.
- e. Land acquired outside the boundary may be exchanged for non-Federal lands within the area and any portion of the land not utilized for exchange may be disposed of in accord with Federal property regulations.
- f. Gives authority for the use of acquired property for the purposes of administration, preservation, or public use.
- g. Allows owners of improved property used for non-commercial residential purposes to retain the right of use and occupancy of the property until the death of the occupant or for 25 years.
- h. Allows for retained mineral interests subject to management directives provided in the law.
- i. Directs the Secretary of the Interior, when the United States buys only surface rights, to reserve the right to inspect and regulate the extraction of minerals to protect the values for which the Big South Fork NRRA was established.
- j. Defines and restricts permitted activities within the gorge of the Big South Fork NRRA.

- k. Defines and allows a full range of recreational use on the adjacent or plateau lands of the Big South Fork NRRA.
- l. Directs the study of the feasibility of re-establishing rail transportation or other alternatives on the abandoned O&W railbed.
- m. Authorized the acquisition and maintenance of public roads, other than State highways, for the purpose of establishing a circulatory road system within the boundary.
- n. Prohibits the removal of timber in the adjacent areas except where required for the development or maintenance of public use and for administrative sites. Limits the removal of timber in gorge areas to "limited clearing necessary for establishment of day use facilities, historical sites, primitive campgrounds and access roads."
- o. Directs the study of the New River drainage to determine the best way to deal with pollution of the Big South Fork River mainstream.

3. 1976 Amendment:

Section 184 of Public Law 94-587 (90 Stat. 2940) amended the Big South Fork enabling legislation on October 22, 1976, and provided additional direction to park management:

- a. Authorized the acquisition of land outside the boundary of the Big South Fork for administrative and visitor orientation facilities and a site for the Tabard Inn at Rugby.
- b. Modified the original restriction that lands belonging to the States of Kentucky and Tennessee or any political subdivision thereof be acquired by donation, by adding the language "...which were in public ownership at the time of enactment of this section." The language now reads: "...Lands... owned by the States of Kentucky and Tennessee or any political sub-divisions thereof which were in public ownership at the time of enactment of this section." (October 22, 1976)
- c. Allowed for the continued operation and maintenance of the Kentucky and Tennessee (K&T) Railroad within the gorge.
- d. Authorized acquisition of easement rights held by the K&T Railroad, as needed, for the protection of the scenic, aesthetic and recreational values of the gorge.

4. 1990 Amendment:

In 1990, an additional amendment to Public Law 93-251 [Public Law 101-561 (104 Stat. 2778)] transferred to the Secretary of the Interior, from the Corps of Engineers, the responsibility for all planning, acquisition, development and administration of the Big South Fork. The amendment made the following changes.

- a. Allowed for improvements of the Charit Creek Lodge concession facility which is located in the gorge portion of the Big South Fork, as long as those improvements were consistent with the historic scene and within the approximately 30 acres of cleared land existing at date of enactment.
- b. Allowed motor vehicle access to the gorge for NPS administrative needs and on a controlled basis on existing cemetery access routes.
- c. Changed previous language from "non-vehicular" to "non-motorized."

Compliance with Federal, State, and Local Laws and Park Jurisdiction

BISO operates under the jurisdiction of the Federal government. The Park has concurrent jurisdiction with the State of Tennessee.

Law enforcement is conducted by NPS rangers holding Federal law enforcement commissions. Federal law and some state laws, through the Act of June 25, 1948, The Assimilative Crimes Act, are enforced by these officers. Local and state law enforcement officers enter the Park and enforce local and state law as well. The Park has a Memorandum of Understanding with the surrounding police departments that describes the law enforcement and mutual aid relationships. Several law enforcement park rangers are also deputized as county deputies.

Structural fire protection is conducted by the 7th District Volunteer Fire Department. There is no in park structural fire suppression capability, although the Park does have a cooperative agreement with the fire department for training and equipment use. The Concessioner should develop his relationship with the 7th District VFD. The Concessioner should develop in his staff, a self-defense capability for fires that occur during business hours by proper training, use of extinguisher, and adjacent hydrants.

Wildland fire suppression is primarily conducted by park employees in cooperation with the Tennessee Division of Forestry and local volunteer fire departments.

Public health codes are prescribed by the United States Public Health Service (USPHS), and inspections will be conducted in accordance with model codes they have issued. The USPHS will inspect and supervise the operation of the Park's water supply and sewage disposal systems. They will also inspect food service operations. Plans for food service facilities will require approval of The Service, in consultation with the U.S. Public Health Service. That approval will be coordinated by The Service. County health inspections will also be conducted on a schedule that the county will determine for the water, sewer systems, and food service. The county also reviews plans and drawings for appropriate health and safety requirements. Prior to opening a food service facility, plans must be submitted to the state (through the county) for approval.

Building codes used by the county are the same as those used by the Service. Whenever a question arises as to applicability, the highest standard must be applied.

All plans for improvements and construction must be reviewed prior to construction and occupancy by the Service and the county. County fees must be paid. The county will only approve plans as complying with codes they require to be used. Any higher standards required by The Service will be part of the Service review process. No construction may be undertaken unless The Service has issued a letter or permit to proceed and has approved the plans involved.

Although operations are conducted on Federal property, The Concessioner is subject to state and local laws and ordinances in the same manner as if they operated outside of the Federal holding. The following are or may be required.

A business permit: \$20.00 initially and one eighth of one percent on gross revenue annually thereafter.

Park Management Structure

The BISO operates with a structure similar to that of many national parks. The top manager for the area is the Park Superintendent. An Assistant Superintendent and a Community Planner assist him. Individual park functions are managed by divisions. A chief of the division heads each division. An administrative officer assists the Park as a whole in matters of finance, personal, and purchasing.

The Concessioner will work principally with the Chief Park Ranger, who serves as Concession Specialist for the Park. He has been delegated responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of the Parks concession program, coordination with the Concessioner in day to day operations and makes decisions within park and NPS policy. Major operational questions for the

concession operation are made by the Park Superintendent and the Chief Ranger in accord with park legislation and NPS policy.

The Concessioner will have only limited "official" contact with other members of the Park staff. These contacts will typically be for the purpose of coordinating activities and park support of the concession operation in areas such as maintenance, interpretation, and protection.

To assure coordination, ALL REQUESTS for assistance from any park official, except of an emergency nature, MUST be made through the Superintendent. Events of an emergency nature should be handled in the most expeditious manner with a follow-up communication with the Chief Ranger.

Park Resource Management Issues

Approximately half of the total acreage within the Big South Fork lies in the gorge and half lies in the adjacent area. Generally speaking, the gorge is to be protected in its pristine and natural state, while the adjacent area may be used more intensely for the development of recreation and support facilities.

The land within the boundary is generally steep and rough, with elevations ranging from 650 to 1,700 feet, above mean sea level. Streams are closely bordered by precipitous bluffs, which form deep gorges. Bottom lands are practically non-existent. The land, almost completely forested, has only a scattering of small cleared areas.

Vegetation in the Big South Fork watershed is complex and diverse because of the area's abrupt topographic changes and past land uses. Extensive forest cover, the topography, and the availability of water, provides a rich forest habitat for a variety of wildlife. There is a rich fishery along much of the Big South Fork and its tributaries. However, coal, oil, natural gas production, logging, agricultural and residential use and, more recently, construction activities in the local communities threaten the main stem as well as the numerous small tributary streams.

There are 83 known rare, endangered, or threatened species within the boundary. One additional species may soon be listed as endangered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Campground users must be made aware of the regulations established to protect these species. The Concessioner is expected to include information about protection of park resources in all contacts with the Park visitor.

Several activities occur at the Big South Fork which, if not properly regulated and controlled, could be viewed as threats. Some activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, and mineral extraction in

the adjacent area, are allowed by congressional mandate. If such uses are properly regulated to ensure protection and preservation of the resources and values for which the unit was established, they should not prove harmful. The major resource issues are listed below. The Concessioner is expected to know and support all park positions on any threats to the Big South Fork resource.

A. Off Road Vehicles: Uncontrolled use of motorized off road vehicles is quite common on the trails within the boundary. Such vehicles also utilize park dirt and gravel roads. Use of off-road vehicles has created a lacework of primitive roads. A Roads and Trails Management Plan is completed which inventoried and designated the use for all roads and trails.

B. Logging: Logging, which is occurring or threatened on several non-Federal tracts, is a major impact as it disrupts the scenic qualities of the area and greatly increases siltation in area waterways.

C. Marijuana Cultivation: The illegal cultivation of marijuana is occurring throughout the area. Marijuana cultivation is harmful to the Big South Fork's resources due to indiscriminate use of pesticides, herbicides, vegetation removal and poisoning of wildlife. There is also a threat to visitor safety as recreational users may inadvertently stumble upon illegal growers. The park conducts an active marijuana detection program to eliminate this problem from the area.

D. Mining: Active and abandoned strip and deep mines cause a major impact on the Big South Fork resources. Seepage from the deep and strip mines and siltation from the strip mines have adversely affected the main stem and tributaries of the Big South Fork River.

E. Sewage: Although there have been significant improvements, inadequate sewage treatment in surrounding communities is having a direct impact on the main stem, as raw sewage often overflows into streams which enter the Park. Pine Creek which drains from Oneida, Tennessee and White Oak Creek which drains from Sunbright, Tennessee are examples. Pine Creek has been posted by the State of Tennessee as unsafe for human contact along its entire length.

F. Siltation: Impact from siltation, is seen as a result of development occurring adjacent to the Park, as well as from roads, trails, and mineral extraction activity within the Park.

G. Oil/Gas: Existing oil and/or gas production, exploration and related activities are perhaps the major source of impacts. Poorly regulated oil and gas activities can cause

siltation, crude oil spills, brine water spills, threaten the aquifer, and destroy vegetation, as new sites are developed and roads constructed. Although authorized by legislation, if not properly managed, such uses can conflict with resource protection mandates, also found in the act. This necessitates a close balancing by the Service to assure that legislatively authorized extraction activities are accomplished in a manner that is sensitive to the areas resource protection mandate.

36 CFR 9(B) regulations provide the regulatory tools needed to balance extraction activities with resource protection objectives. The cooperation of State regulatory agencies is also needed to assure a proper balance. Oil and gas extraction activity is occurring or may occur on 75 tracts affecting approximately 18,900 acres. There are also approximately 75 abandoned well sites, some of which periodically are on fire or under great pressure, and pose a danger to the area users. The Service is working with the State of Tennessee to mitigate these problems.

Roads and Trails: The Big South Fork has 300 miles of designated trails and several hundred miles of old dirt and gravel roads, many of which are not mapped. A Roads and Trails Management Plan has been prepared by the Park to better manage these facilities. Roads and trails are being identified, uses noted, needed connectors identified, levels of maintenance noted, etc.

The GMP and Roads and Trails plan was completed in 2005. They will resolve the question of appropriate use(s) and how to spread the available funding and manpower over an extensive network of roads and trails within the gorge and adjacent area. It should also point the way to an intelligent approach to management of off road motor vehicles, which currently use all adjacent area roads.

Black Bear Reintroduction: A study completed by the University of Tennessee determined that the reintroduction of black bear at the Big South Fork and Daniel Boone National Forest was feasible. An experimental release was conducted in 1996 and 1997. The Park currently has a population of approximately 25 –30 bears. Additional studies will be conducted to determine if any more bears will be added. The Park has taken a position in support of the reintroduction provided certain educational, habitat, and cost conditions can be met.

Archeological Resources: The area has been described as one of the most significant archeological areas in the Southeast. There are an estimated 10,000 archeological sites within the boundary. The Big South Fork is conducting a multi-year archeological resources survey. Previous research has indicated use of the area back to the Paleo-Indian period --10,000 resources. Protection of the sites is very difficult with the limited available manpower for

backcountry patrol.

The closure of all unauthorized gorge entry roads has had positive impact on the amount of pot hunting due to an increased level of access difficulty. The Roads and Trails Management Plan will also have an influence as new trails are constructed and the existing network of roads and trails closed or rerouted.

Hunting and Fishing: Fishing, hunting and trapping are all permitted within the National Area. These activities may be regulated and restricted if wildlife and visitor needs dictate after consultation with the State agency responsible for hunting, fishing and trapping activities.

A variety of fishing is possible at the Big South Fork. The diversity of habitat, from white water to pools on the mainstream to small cold mountain streams allows many varieties of fish to reproduce. Fishing pressure is moderate except at limited locations where access is easy. Fishing from canoes and rafts, bank fishing, small stream fishing, and powerboat fishing are all relatively common in the Park.

Cemeteries: There are 57 cemeteries and/or grave sites known within the boundary. The . COE specifically exempted cemeteries from its land acquisition activities, although some abandoned and forgotten cemeteries were inadvertently acquired.

The Service plans to maintain access routes to cemeteries at the level that existed at the time of Federal acquisition of the access. Control of access to the cemeteries that are located in the gorge portion of the Park is an inherent governmental responsibility. Therefore, access to gorge cemeteries is by request to the Big South Fork management, and is limited.

Maintenance of cemetery access is difficult. There are more access roads and trails than existing park maintenance staff can maintain and repair. Responsiveness to the needs of families on a road by road basis is the approach presently used. With prior notification, access improvements to bring a road back to the condition it was at the time of acquisition, are possible.

Solid waste disposal: As a Federal conservation agency, as well as a concerned and responsible member of the community, The Service supports efforts to reduce the generation of non-biodegradable solid waste and find alternatives to non-biodegradable packaging materials.

Methods of control of vermin, pest and weeds must be approved in advance by the Service before execution.

Park Interpretive Themes and Goals

Interpretation at Big South Fork NRAA is closely tied to the purpose of the Area as expressed in enabling legislation. The legislative mandates for the Big South Fork are described above. It is required that the Concessioner tie his informational activities and all gift and souvenir sales to these purposes.

Additional and more in depth information about park interpretive services, themes, and goals may be obtained by contacting the BISO Chief of Interpretation.

PARK PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS

The GMP calls for continued use of the area with improvements within a determined ecological and recreational carrying capacity and consistent with the historic scene. Additionally, a Commercial Service Plan will outline services needed.

Each of the planning documents which exist provide information and direction to park management and form the basis for development and activity decisions which may impact a park concessioner. At the least, concessioner should be familiar with the basic guidance contained in PL 93-251, BISO enabling legislation; the General Management Plan for the area; and the directions indicated in the most current revision of the Parks Statement for Management - Basic Operations Statement.

All concession employees who have public contact should be aware of the major concepts governing management of the BISO so that they will be able to demonstrate support for the Park mission and vision for the future; a basic requirement of a concessioner in a National Park.

The documents are all available for review in the Big South Fork library located in the Park headquarters building.

BISO Master Plan, Design Memorandum, Nov. 7, 1976:

Page 5-5: Indicates that one of the legislative directions for the BISO is the goal that the area "... benefit the economy of the region" by the provision of "... lodges, developed campsites, concessionaire and food serviced facilities in order to encourage local and regional private enterprises."

Supplement to the Master Plan: Parchcorn Hunting Lodge Buildings, November

18, 1984. This document officially created the supplement to the Corps Master Plan for the Big South Fork. It recommended improvements and additions to the existing (at that time) Parchcorn Lodge facilities, to create a facility to be operated by "contract or concessioner" or by the Service, "... consistent with conserving and interpreting the history of the area which are stated purposes in the Authorizing Act."

Big South Fork Statement for Management - Basic Operations Statement, 1993:

This document provides a clear and concise look at major issues and needs for the BISO. It is a document which is periodically updated to reflect progress in development and activities.

Page 37: Briefly mentions the need to renew expired concession permits and the need for approval of all concession arrangements as Major Issues for the Park.

Page 39: Begins a section listing Big South Fork Management Objectives; all of which may have an influence on a concessioner.

Specific objectives which are of direct interest to concessioner:

Manage the area to allow recreational hunting, fishing, and trapping as well as for a variety of environmentally sound and well maintained recreational facilities.

Promote the opportunity and means to learn about, experience, and enjoy the special values of the Big South Fork while assuring the protection of those values.

Provide a full range of visitor developments necessary for user recreational experiences (such as campgrounds and horse camps), and the necessary support facilities for proper maintenance and upkeep.

Develop the natural recreational potential of the Park for the enjoyment of the public and the economic benefit of the region.

BISO Reduced Scope Plan, 1981:

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers scaled back development plans as described in the Master Plan

for the area due to insufficient funding to implement the entire plan. This document describes those portions which were developed by the Corps prior to turning the area over to The Service for management.

PARK MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR CONCESSION SERVICES

The need for commercial visitor services at the BISO is based on objectives for visitor use described in law, planning documents that exist for the Park, and the judgement of management considering the way the Park is currently used and the present objectives of the Service. The Service has determined that the services that are called for in this Prospectus are necessary and appropriate to the purposes of BISO.

(1) Required Visitor Services. The Concessioner is required to provide the following visitor services during the term of the CONTRACT:

- a) Operation of the equestrian campgrounds at Station Camp Horse Camp and Bear Creek Horse Camp on a reservation basis for horse and non-horse campers making short and long day rides, overnight trips, and multi-day trips;
- (b) Operation of a reservation system capable of accepting calls and messages 24 hours a day, seven days a week, on a year-round basis; and
- © Provision of a 24-hour telephone answering system that will be available year-round for the public to contact the Concessioner at any time the horse camps are not staffed or when the telephone lines are not available.

(2) Authorized Visitor Services. The Concessioner is authorized, but not required to provide the following visitor services during the term of the CONTRACT:

- (a) sale of souvenirs;
- (b) sale of snacks, and
- © sale of horse related items such as; tack, feed, hay, veterinarian supplies, fly spray, halters, lead ropes, Chicago screws, etc;